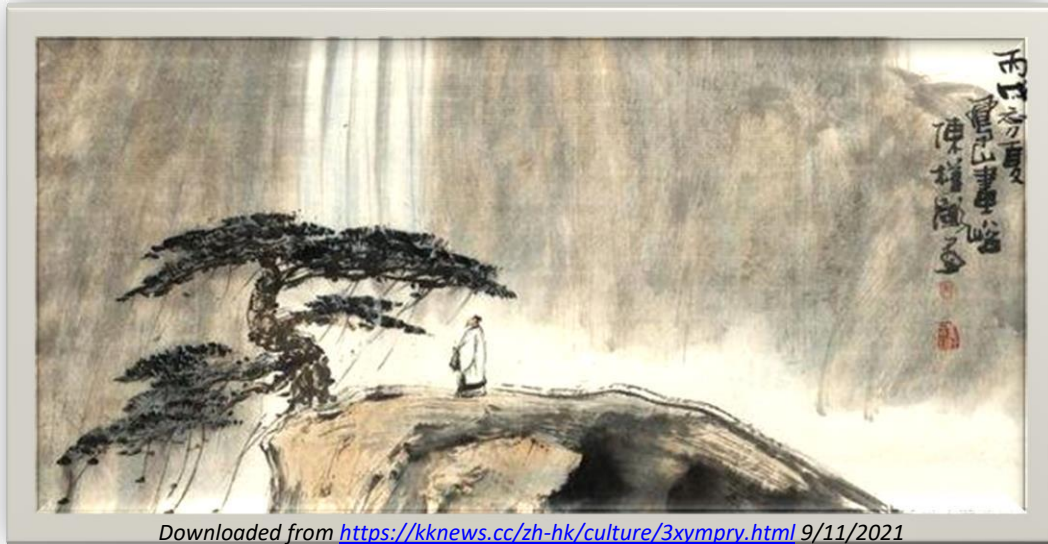


# Taoism

Postgraduate Seminar - Spring 2022

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

## Syllabus



### Instructor:

Prof. Jenny HUNG ([hmjhung@ust.hk](mailto:hmjhung@ust.hk))

Course Schedule: Weds 10:30 – 13:20 (LSK1007)

Course Zoom link:

<https://hkust.zoom.us/j/97281274486?pwd=TTZTY0g3N0ITSUcvbm0vTmFjR1ZsQT09>

Meeting ID: 972 8127 4486 Passcode:

855339

Office hours: Tues, Thurs 12:00 – 13:00

### Course Description:

This course introduces the students to the Taoist tradition through guiding them to the major Taoist texts, their representative commentaries, and the important scholarly works in the field.

### Learning Outcomes

#### Students will learn to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the philosophies of some important schools of Taoism;
2. Analyze some key philosophical claims and concepts related to themes in Taoism;
3. Critically evaluate some of the original texts, commentaries and secondary literature in Taoism **Prerequisites**

- MA, MPhil, and PhD students are all welcome.
- Chinese language is not required. The course will be conducted in (simple) English. We read translated texts with commentaries.
- Prior knowledge of philosophy, Chinese history, or religion will be helpful though not necessary. **Co-requisites, and Cross-lists:** none

### **Course Requirements**

- In-class Participation and Discussion: 10%
- One Presentation (about 40 mins): 20%  
*Two/three students in a group if necessary. Each group chooses one piece of reading material to present.*
- Midterm paper (max. 2000 words, in Chinese or English): 30% (by 25 March)
- Final paper (max. 3000 words, in Chinese or English): 40% (by 15 May)

### **Methodologies:**

The class will be conducted in a hybrid lecture-seminar format. I will provide background information about Daoism and introduce the four main texts: the Book of Changes, the Daodejing, the Zhuangzi, and the Liezi. I will review the main arguments and explain the structure of thought of the assigned reading(s) and will introduce arguments for different views proposed by the ancient Taoist philosophers. We will also watch selected parts of documentaries, movies of Chinese thinkers, exciting videos of psychology experiments. There will be space for students to raise questions. I expect active participation with questions and comments. We will also have discussions of ideas and debates among students with opposite views. Students are encouraged to share thoughts. We will explore the metaphysical views with their practical implications, ethical consequences, and potential difficulties of thoughts by each of the Taoist thinker and make comparisons between them.

#### *In-class participation:*

Your participation in class will be evaluated based on how well you are prepared for each class and the quality and frequency of your contributions.

#### *Absence:*

Attendance is expected at all sessions. 1.5 marks will be deducted from the final grade for each absence from class (starting from the third absence) unless there is medical support.

#### *Consultation:*

I will arrange private meetings with each student to discuss the ideas and plans for the assignments. In addition, you can send your midterm and final paper to me early. I will try to give comments before the deadline such that you can revise it and then officially submit a revised version.

#### *Presentation:*

You can select any readings or topics in the syllabus to give a short presentation for about 40 minutes. For example, you can summarize (25 mins) an essay and tell us what you think about it (15 mins). We will discuss the paper afterward. Other students are welcome to give comments.

#### *Midterm and Final papers:*

Identify a question from the reading materials, videos, documentaries, or optional readings from this course and analyze it in depth. You can either (1) provide a critical assessment to an argument or idea you encountered in the course or (2) make a comparison between thoughts of two ancient Taoist philosophers, or between that of Taoist philosopher and a thinker in a different tradition. You may also (3) formulate an argument or set of arguments for a position in support of, or opposing to, that of a Taoist philosopher. You will be expected to read and cite several articles or books pertinent to your topic and include a bibliography in the paper.

*Debates:*

We will have short debates in class on controversial issues in Taoism. I will invite students with different positions to speak aloud and provide justifications for their thoughts. Students are encouraged to help each other in formulating arguments and replying to opponents. Debate topics and dates are listed in the tentative schedule; you are welcome to prepare for them if you like. I hope you enjoy the process and learn from the activity.

*Cameras:*

If you attend the classes online, you are required to have your camera turned on and directed toward your face during class meetings so that your fellow students and I can see you. Keeping your camera off (or keeping yourself out of view) will result in a reduction of your participation grade. If you have a special reason to keep your camera off and believe that you should be exempt from this requirement, please email me immediately to discuss your situation.

**Textbook:**

- All readings will be uploaded to canvas.

**Tentative Schedule**

Date	Topic	Readings	Activities
9 Feb	Historical Context, The Book of Changes	1. The Book of Changes (selected) 2. Ch 1, Karyn Lai (2008)	Lecture
16 Feb	Qi, Yin Yang	3. Liu, JeeLoo, "In defense of Chinese qi naturalism" 4. Mou, "On Becoming-Being Complementarity: An account of the Yin-Yang Metaphysical Vision of the Yi-Jing"	Lecture
23 Feb	Laozi	5. Daodejing (selected) 6. Ch 5, Karyn Lai (2008)	Lecture Documentary: Hermit of Zhongnan Mount: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3R0h3dvL73w">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3R0h3dvL73w</a> (from 1:15:30)
2 Mar	Laozi: Logic	7. Daodejing (selected) 8. Ch 6, Karyn Lai (2008) 9. Fung, "A Logical Perspective on the Daodejing"	Lecture Professor Fung's Guest Lecture
9 Mar	Laozi: Dao&language	10. Daodejing (selected) 11. McDonough, "The Dao that Cannot be Named" (Zhang Jiayu, Wu Shang) 12. Cheung, "The Metaphysics and Unnamability of the Dao in the Daodejing and Wittgenstein" ( Dickson, Paul Lo, Ding Tianxin)	Student Presentations 1,2 <b>Debate 1:</b> Is Laozi an antiintellectualist?
16 Mar	Zhuangzi: the self	13. Zhuangzi: Inner Chapters (all) 14. Hung, "The Theory of the Self in the Zhuangzi: A Strawsonian Interpretation"	Lecture with Documentary: The homeless with no regrets <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a6f6cxg3uHg">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a6f6cxg3uHg</a>

23 Mar	Zhuangzi: desires	15. Zhuangzi: Outer chapters (selected)	Lecture
		16. Hung, "Is Zhuangzi a Wanton? Observation and Transformation of Desires in the Zhuangzi"	
30 Mar	Zhuangzi: debate	17. Zhuangzi: Misc chapters (selected)	Lecture <b>Debate 2:</b> Does a True Man have emotions?
6 Apr	Zhuangzi: spirituality	18. Fraser, "Wandering the Way-A Eudaimonisti : Approach to the Zhuangzi" (LIN Zhiyi 和 ZHA Zhengjie) Møllgaard, "Zhuangzi's notion of 19. transcendental life" (张宇霖 陈重昊 段洪雨) 20. Fung, "Zhuangzi's Idea of Oneness with Spec Reference to the Story of Happy Fish" (Fu binxin, Chen zhenzhen, Zhou siyan) Chad Hansen, "Relatively Happy Fish" 21. (Zhao jinyu, Zhen ximeng, Huang Zideng)	Student presentations 3,4,5,6
20 Apr	Zhuangzi: Ontology & Epistemology	22. Northoff & Cheng, "Levels of Time in the Zhuangzi-A Leibnizian Perspective" (Shin) 23. Sturgeon, "Zhuangzi Perspectives and Great Knowledge" (赵卿竹 袁凌霄) 24. Huang, "Respecting Different Ways of Life: A Daoist Ethics of Virtue in the Zhuangzi" (Gao Hang, Zhuyanqing, Yang Xie) 25. Fung, "Skill and Dao in the Zhuangzi" (Tang Chenyu, Chen Siheng, Cao, Chang, Guo Yang)	Student presentations 7,8,9,10
27 Apr	Comparison	26. Liu, "The Daoist Conception of Truth: Laozi's Metaphysical Realism VS Zhuangzi's Internalism" (Li Xiang, Sun Yiting, Tang Songhan) 27. Garfield and Priest, "Knots in the Dao" (Xu Shuyao)	Student presentations 11,12 <b>Debate 3:</b> Which proposal about social responsibility is better, Laozi's or Zhuangzi's ?
4 May	Liezi	28. Liezi (selected) 29. Ivanhoe, "The Theme of Unselfconsciousness in the Liezi" (Liu Xinkun, Gao Wenquan)	Lecture Student presentation 13

11 May	Yang Zhu	30. Yang Zhu 31. Zhao, "Yang Zhu's Guiji Yangsheng and Its Modern Relevance" (Bob Chung WOO)	Lecture Benevolence <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2KqrLDj9K_Q">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2KqrLDj9K_Q</a> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x8AmBhhAZAk">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x8AmBhhAZAk</a> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z-eU5xZW7cU">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z-eU5xZW7cU</a> Psychopaths <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L6LLQ1POzhY">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L6LLQ1POzhY</a> (4:22 – 5:45) Student presentation 14
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😊 Enjoy! 😊